

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

December 30, 2021

Governor-elect Glenn Youngkin
Office of the Governor
P.O. Box 1475
Richmond, VA 23218

Dear Governor-elect Youngkin,

As you prepare to assume office next month, we write to you regarding the importance of prevention and mitigation strategies that can be implemented to keep schools safely open for in-person learning, including Test to Stay protocols. We trust you agree that students need to be in the classroom and we as policymakers must do our best to ensure they stay there. The *American Rescue Plan Act*, which we proudly supported, provides billions in resources for Virginia K-12 schools to protect the health of students, staff, and educators. As members of Congress with school-aged children, we strongly encourage you to utilize this funding to keep schools safely open.

In March 2021, President Biden signed the *American Rescue Plan Act* into law – the largest-ever one-time federal investment in K-12 education. The law included more than \$2.1 billion for Virginia through the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief program to help students, educators, and parents across the Commonwealth address the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Notably, the *American Rescue Plan Act* also allocated more than \$257 million to support COVID-19 testing programs in Virginia’s schools through the Epidemiology and Lab Capacity (ELC) Reopening Schools program.ⁱ

In October 2021, the U.S. Department of Education approved Virginia’s American Rescue Plan Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief plan. Under the plan, funding is to be used to address learning loss due to the pandemic and support prevention and mitigation strategies for a safe return to in-person instruction. We were pleased to see the Virginia General Assembly allocate an additional \$244 million in *American Rescue Plan Act* funding in August 2021 to support COVID-19 testing in schools, which was used to provide free COVID-19 testing for dozens of school districts across the Commonwealth.

On December 17, 2021, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) published two evaluations of separate school districts’ implementation of Test to Stay protocols as a tool to minimize absenteeism and learning loss.ⁱⁱ When used as part of a layered prevention strategy, Test to Stay guidelines can allow students who would otherwise have to quarantine at home to continue in-person learning if they test negative for COVID-19 at least twice during a seven-day period after exposure. When combined with other prevention strategies such as promoting

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vaccinations, consistent use of masks indoors, social distancing, and staying home when sick, Test to Stay practices can be a vital tool to ensure schools safely remain open.

We urge you to keep policies in place that allow schools to use American Rescue Plan funding to promote known prevention and mitigation strategies, as well as develop a strategy to expand Test to Stay programs to schools across the Commonwealth. We hope your administration will prioritize federal funding to expand this program, so it is available for all schools that wish to participate.

Thank you for your attention to this important issue impacting our schools, students, parents, and communities. We look forward to working with you to ensure the health, safety, and academic opportunity for all children across the Commonwealth as we contend with the COVID-19 pandemic.

Sincerely,



Jennifer Wexton
Member of Congress



Abigail Spanberger
Member of Congress



Elaine Luria
Member of Congress

CC Governor Ralph Northam

ⁱ <https://www.cdc.gov/budget/fact-sheets/covid-19/funding/index.html>

ⁱⁱ <https://www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2021/s1217-Test-To-Stay.html>